

## A HISTORY OF LEI DAY

The lei known the world over, is a symbol of aloha. Great care is taken into the gathering of the materials to make a lei. After the materials are gathered, they are prepared and then fashioned into a lei. As this is done, the mana (or spirit) of the creator of the lei is sewn or woven into it. Therefore, when you give a lei, you are giving a part of you. Likewise, as you receive a lei, you are receiving a part of the creator of the lei.



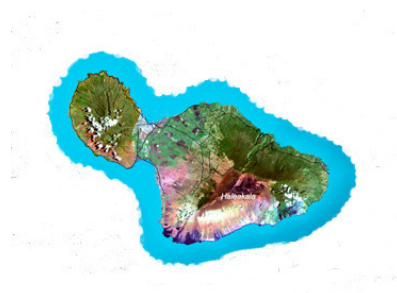
### ISLAND OF HAWAI'I

Color: 'Ula'ula (red)

Flower: 'Ōhi'a Lehua (*Metrosideros macropus*)



Visitors to Hawai'i quickly became accustomed to the lei as an expression of welcome and hospitality. Poet laureate, Don Blanding, thought that Hawai'i should have a day set aside to celebrate and recognize the custom of giving and receiving lei. While working at the Honolulu Star Bulletin, Don discussed the idea with "Kamaaina Kolumn" columnist Grace Tower Warren. She enthusiastically embraced the idea and suggested that the day should be May Day and coined the phrase *May Day is Lei Day*. Inspired by their zeal, Leonard "Red" and Ruth Hawk, a musician, composed *May Day is Lei Day in Hawai'i*. This song resonates throughout every Lei Day celebration in the State of Hawai'i.



### ISLAND OF MAUI

Color: 'Ākala (pink)

Flower: Lokelani (*Rosa damascena*)



The first Lei Day was in 1927 and celebrated in downtown Honolulu with a few people wearing lei. From that it grew and more and more people began to wear lei on May 1. We are told that the first celebration and exhibit of lei was at the Bank of Hawai'i.



Photo courtesy of Honolulu Star Advertiser

In 1928, the first lei queen was Nina Bowman. Mayor Charles Arnold crowned lei Queen Nina Bowman here in Honolulu.



#### ISLAND OF O'AHU

Color: Pala luhiehu (golden yellow) or melemele (yellow)

Flower: 'Ilima (*Sida fallax*)



After a few years, Lei Day was held at City Hall with a lei exhibit and pageant. The lei of the eight major Hawaiian Islands became the theme for the pageant and a lei queen chosen with a princess representing each of the islands, wearing lei fashioned with the island's flower and color.



#### ISLAND OF MOLOKA'I

Color: 'Ōma'oma'o (green)

Flower: Kukui (*Aleurites moluccana*)



Gaining in popularity, the celebration soon outgrew City Hall where it then became the responsibility of the City's Department of Parks and Recreation. The celebration was moved to Kapi'olani Park, where it continues to this day. The program continues to honor the day with a queen and her court, and adult and children's lei contests. Entertainment with many hālau participating adds to the day's festivities.



#### ISLAND OF LĀNA'I

Color: 'Alani (orange)

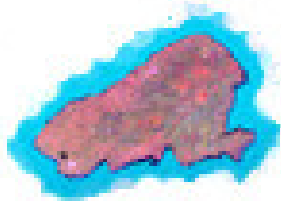
Flower: Kauna'oa (*Cuscuta sandwichiana*)





At the adult lei contest, you will see lei exhibited in a variety of colors and methods. Keiki are especially encouraged to learn and perpetuate the artistry of lei making. Awards are given in both lei contests. The theme for Lei Day varies each year (please refer to our Theme listing).

### ISLAND OF KAHOLA'OLAWE



Color: Hinahina (silvery gray)

Flower: Hinahina (*Heliotropium anomalum*)



Traditionally held on May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, the queen and court will reside over the City's annual Lei Day Celebration at the Queen Kapi'olani Regional Park and Bandstand. The event begins 9:00 a.m., and ends at 5:30 p.m. Activities featured throughout the day include the Lei Exhibit which includes the most gorgeous lei in the world (12:30 to 5:30 p.m.); Tūtū's Hale for keiki (children) and their 'ohana (family); Royal Hawaiian Band and Hawaiian Steel Guitar concerts; a ho'olaule'a exhibition of Hawaiian crafts; and, vendors and food booths (times and activities are subject to change).



### ISLAND OF KAUAI

Color: Poni (purple)

Flower: Mokihana (*Pelea anisata*)

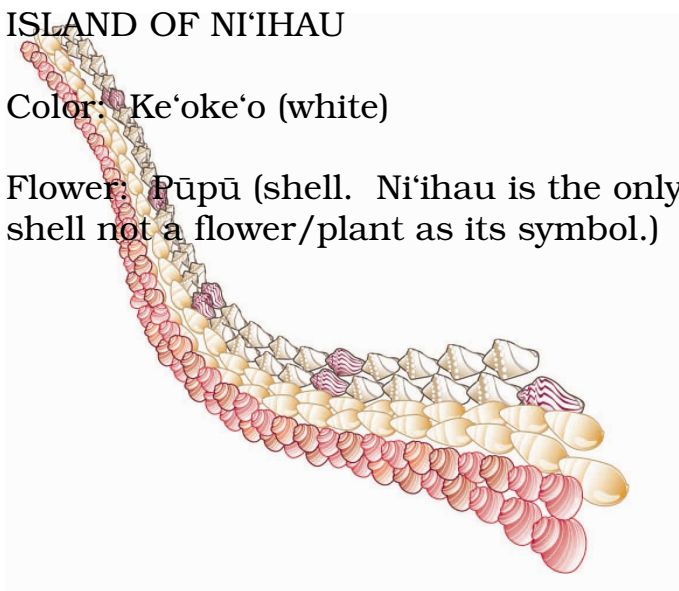


On May 2, the contest lei will be taken to Mauna 'Ala, the Royal Mausoleum at 2261 Nu'uanu Avenue. The public is invited to this ceremony, which begins at 9:00 a.m. The lei may be viewed before the ceremony begins. As part of the ceremony, the public participates by draping the lei on the crypts and tombs of our ali'i.

## ISLAND OF NI'HAU

Color: Ke'oke'o (white)

Flower: Pūpū (shell. Ni'ihau is the only island with a shell not a flower/plant as its symbol.)



Mahalo nui loa to Professor Gerald Carr of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Department of Botany, for graciously allowing the City and County of Honolulu, Department of Parks and Recreation to use his and H. St. John's photographs of the island flowers. These materials are freely provided for instructional and educational purposes. Any duplication or publication of text or images as provided by Professor Gerald Carr or H. St. John herein for commercial gain without explicit written permission of the owner or photographer constitutes breach of trust and violation of copyright. For more information:

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Mahalo nui loa to the Honolulu Star Advertiser for graciously allowing us to use their photograph of the first Lei Queen, Miss Nina Bowman and her court.

Mahalo nui loa to our sponsors, the Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc., Times Supermarkets, Ltd., and a generous grant from the Hawai'i Tourism Authority.